

1-1 February 1982
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TALKING POINTS FOR WORLDWIDE BRIEFING

Palestinian Situation and Syria-Israel-Lebanon: Status of Crisis

The positions of the Israeli government and the most pragmatic Arabs on Palestinian issues are far apart. Essentially, the problems revolve around Arab insistence on Palestinian self-determination versus the Israeli government's insistence on an administrative autonomy. This impasse is reflected most graphically in S. Lebanon.

Israeli officials continue to express concern over the Palestinian arms buildup and presence of Syrian surface-to-air missile sites in Lebanon. Israel has a variety of military options it can exercise against the Palestinians in southern Lebanon and the missile sites, ranging from preemptive airstrikes to launching a large-scale ground operation.

-- The Israelis still have elements of up to two divisions-- approximately 20,000 troops--in northern Israel and the Golan Heights. This gives them the capability of initiating division-sized operations into Lebanon with little or no additional preparations while also defending the Golan long enough to allow reserves to be brought up.

-- Two new elements expand the likely scope of any Israeli action beyond what we witnessed in Spring, 1978.

- The presence of 130mm artillery in the hands of Palestinian forces provides them a range of 27.5 kilometers, which extends the territory Israel must control in order to provide security significantly northward.

- [REDACTED] known inclinations of senior Israeli figures and many in the IDF favor an operation to decimate the PLO as a political and military force. This would imply a blocking operation against Palestinian withdrawal to the north or east, and possibly commando raids in Beirut.

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-- The Syrians have three SA-6 batteries in the Bekaa Valley; three SA-6 batteries in the mountains on the Lebanese side of the Syrian border; and three SA-6, two SA-2, and two SA-3 batteries near the border, but in Syria. The Israelis could attack these sites using a combination of aircraft with an array of "smart" weapons and surface-launched missiles designed to home on the SAM tracking radars. A ground or commando assault against the sites would be more costly.

Syria continues to improve the preparedness of its forces.

-- [REDACTED] Syrians have stationed electronic countermeasure units near the Golan Heights and set up tent camps in the garrison areas of the four divisions opposite the Heights. They also have taken

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nearly 100 older model reserve tanks out of storage. The Syrians earlier recalled up to 40,000 reservists to flesh out regular units.

- ^{recent}
- The firing ~~this week~~ of surface-to-air missiles in reaction to Israeli air activity over Lebanon also indicates heightened Syrian concern. President Assad is said to have ordered the stockpiling of staples as a contingency in the event of hostilities.
 - Assad reportedly told a recent meeting of the ruling Baath Party that he expected an Israeli incursion into southern Lebanon before Israel completes its withdrawal from the Sinai in late April. He indicated that Syria would respond to such an incursion, but he did not reveal any specifics. The Syrians, meanwhile, continue to pursue their diplomatic effort at the UN by seeking a special session of the General Assembly in the coming weeks to debate the Golan Heights issue.
 - Although Syria's actions appear precautionary, Israeli military sources are concerned that Damascus may be planning an eventual military response to the annexation of the Golan Heights. The growing nervousness on both sides increases the possibility of an air clash or some other incident.

Unless Cairo gave him a pretext for delay, Prime Minister Begin would try to separate his agreement with Egypt to withdraw from the Sinai from any intervention in Lebanon. Egypt, however, will avoid any move that could halt an Israeli withdrawal--even if faced with Israeli military action against another Arab state.

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